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Running head: SCHOOL BASED EMPATHY AND BULLY PREVENTION

School Based Program to Teach Children Empathy and Bully Prevention

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Abstract

A qualitative study examined empathy in the easily aroused child. Participants were interviewed about their experience empathy, and cognitive process used to choose responses. Children identified emotions of victim drawing on experience as victims. Two themes were empathetic response and cognition leading to action. Participants used cognition about actions, context, strategies, and consequences. Children discussed fairness, reaction of peers, aiding victims, and stopping aggressor. Program covers identifying bullies, feelings of victims, perspective taking, problem solving, victim aide, and intervention. Students do role-playing, discuss events from school, and make posters. They develop class rules to help identify need to include everyone, and statements that bullying is not allowed. Teachers and administrators assist in changing school climate to support students. Incidents of bullying have dropped 73% overall.

School Based Program to Teach Children Empathy and Bully Prevention

To be emotionally competent means to have the skills necessary to decide on behavior that is efficacious in a variety of situations (Saarni, 1999). These skills include the ability to know one's own feelings, to be able to label them, and to rely on them to guide behavior (Park & Park, 1997). It is also critical to be able to recognize feelings in others and to use that information to accurately interpret actions and predict behaviors (Park & Park; Saarni).

Many children enter school with an understanding of what is expected of them in social situations involving emotional expression. These children have a strong sense of self-efficacy that allows them to try out new strategies in interpersonal situations (Saarni, 1999). These children are not concerned about evaluation of their behavior by others. They are confident in their ability to evaluate a situation and respond with an appropriate display of emotions and behaviors.

Other children enter school with less emotional competence and lack the ability to make good decisions about their behavior. Children with high emotionality, low ability to regulate emotions often lack emotional competence (Park & Park, 1997; Premack & Premack, 1995). These children become likely victims of bullies because they engage in behaviors that are rewarding in some way for the bully (Hodges, Malone, & Perry, 1997). They cry easily, may appear fearful, have few friends, and can be made to submit quickly (Schwartz, Dodge, & Coie, 1993). They lack peer group support as a protection against bullying since they have poor skills in making and keeping friends (Huesmann & Guerra, 1997).

Other easily aroused children engage in behaviors that actually provoke the bully. These include disrupting activities, being argumentative, and attempting to bait the bully with aggressive actions such as verbal taunts (Olweus, 1993; Perry, Perry, & Kennedy, 1992).

Additionally this type of victim can also be highly emotional and quick to become angry (Schwartz, Dodge, Petit, & Bates, 1997). These children are called provocative victims (Olweus, 1993). Adults and peers can easily mistake this behavior for actual bullying.

Victims of bullies suffer not only the immediate harm of hurt feelings, embarrassment, and physical injury, but may also tend to suffer from anxiety, depression, have lowered academic scores due to concentration problems, and may avoid school altogether (Hodges, Malone, & Perry, 1997; Olweus, 1993). Victimization also has an impact on social development for children (Hodges & Perry, 1999). Children who are victimized may change or limit their friends to others who experience similar problems that invite bullying or inappropriate behaviors. This would continue to place them in the role of victim and reinforce the very behaviors causing it.

Deficits in Emotional Competence

One indicator of deficits in emotional competence is a display of antisocial behaviors. This includes a range of aggressive actions that can be either direct or indirect (Berkowitz, 1993). These violations of social rules are as diverse as (a) physical aggression such as hitting, pushing, or tripping; (b) verbal abuse such as name-calling or excessive teasing; and (c) defiance of authority or violation of rules. The strongest aggressive actions are directed toward what is perceived to be the source of unpleasant feelings (Loeber & Hay, 1997). Bullying includes most of these antisocial behaviors. Any aggressive action, whether direct or indirect, that is repeatedly directed at another is considered bullying (Olweus, 1991).

Lack of ability to self-regulate emotional responses is also seen as lack of emotional competence. Adults see children who have limited self-regulation of their emotions as unable to experience the empathy for others needed to engage in prosocial behaviors (Eisenberg et al., 1998; Zahn-Waxler, Radke-Yarrow, Wagner, & Chapman, 1992). This can lead to the

assumption that antisocial behaviors manifested by a child represent pathology and results in efforts to force the child to conform to a predetermined manner of response (Chess & Thomas, 1999). This undermines the child's own ability to interact with and gain mastery over the environment.

Temperament-based behaviors may cause adults to have certain expectations about children (Graziano, Jensen-Campbell, & Sullivan-Logan, 1998). Temperament has been characterized as a form of reactivity to stimulation in the environment and self-regulation of the response and is considered biologically rooted (Rothbart & Bates, 1998; Rothbart, Ahadi, & Evans, 2000). Temperament is a behavioral style and not the content of the behavior itself (Chess & Thomas, 1999). Children respond by engaging in the expected behaviors. Behaviors seen as pathological may be the result of the child's inability to understand what behavior is required for acceptable interaction with the environment (Chess & Thomas, 1999). According to Chess and Thomas, behavior patterns some adults perceive as psychological disorders are a manifestation of a poor fit between a child's temperament and the environment.

The fit of the child's temperament with the environment has an impact on how emotional competence develops (Park & Park, 1997). As the child matures the interaction among temperament, experience, social context, and caregivers shapes emotional response and self-regulation (Rothbart & Ahadi, 1994). The response a child receives from others evokes a specific reaction from the child, which leads to established patterns of behavior (Caspi, 1998). Unfortunately, these patterns of responses may result in negative interactions with both peers and adults.

Temperamental differences in children appear early in life and initially are relatively independent of socialization (Kochanska, 1993). Temperamental differences are not a product of

cognitive development but their expression is modified by cognitive factors. Socializing agents such as teachers and parents observe temperamental differences and expect certain behaviors and developmental consequences (Graziano et al., 1998). Expectations about behaviors may encourage those behaviors to occur (Caspi, 1998).

Temperamental traits usually associated with both internalizing and externalizing behavior problems include (a) irritability-difficultness, (b) inhibition-fearfulness, and (c) impulsivity-unmanageability (Guerin, Gottfried, & Thomas, 1997). These traits affect the development of behavior both directly as a continuous trait and indirectly through the child's impact on parents and others (Rothbart & Bates, 1998).

The trait commonly seen with externalizing behavior problems and lack of prosocial behavior is impulsivity-unmanageability (Caspi, Moffitt, Newman, & Silva, 1996; Rothbart & Bates, 1998). The typical behavior seen in this type of child is failure to comply with attempts by parents or other adults to stop or redirect action (Bates, Pettit, Dodge, & Ridge, 1998). The high impulsivity-unmanageability child may also have a strong attraction to external rewards and lack the ability to inhibit responses. Easily aroused children are highly emotional and quick to become angry. Therefore they often engage in reactive aggressive behaviors. Instead of planned and calculated acts of aggression towards their peers, the easily aroused child may be expressing their frustration and anger after being provoked and loosing control (Schwartz et al., 1997).

Empathy

Empathy has been defined as an affective response that is the result of a state or condition in another person (Hoffman, 1990). Empathy elicits vicariously induced reactions with the clear idea that the other person is distinctly separate. Empathy as a response becomes associated with cognition through operant and social learning processes (Saarni, 1999).

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The most advanced level of empathy occurs in late childhood (Hoffman, 1990). The child has the ability to see self and others as having separate identities. By the age of 8 or 9 years the child begins to focus on inner processes and can reflect on the other person's inner experience of emotion. The other's inner states are vicariously experienced as the child's own. Complex cognitive activity shapes the empathetic response (Bengtsson & Johnson, 1992). The behavior that results from an empathetic response to social situations is based on a series of steps in cognitive processing. Children interpret cues, determine what their options are for behavior, and then make a choice about the action to be taken.

The Empathy Study

A group of ten children were interviewed to examine the experience of empathy in the easily aroused child. These children were selected from referrals made by classroom teachers based on their perception of easily arousability and a history of antisocial behaviors. There were six boys and four girls ranging in age from 9.5 to 11.3 years. The major concern with all of the students was their behavior. The behaviors most related to bullying and the question of empathy included fighting, bullying other students, and social isolation.

The objective of the study was to discover elements of the phenomenon of empathy in easily aroused children who are perceived as aggressive by peers and adults in the environment. Components of the cognitive and affective framework used by the easily aroused child to interpret actions of others were identified. The interview allowed exploration of the unique inner experience of empathy in the easily aroused child. Interviewing provided information that would not otherwise be available to the researcher.

The children were questioned in three areas. The first area was how the child identifies feelings in others. It was important to know if the child was experiencing personal distress and

acting to relieve that or if there was another rationale used to explain behavior. The ability to recognize affect in self and others is a critical aspect of empathy. It was also essential that the child be able to make a distinction between self and others. The actions of the child needed to reflect that the choice of behavior was a way to relieve the suffering or distress of others and not his or her own discomfort.

A second area of questioning was the cognitive process used by the child. The child should be able to correctly attribute intent to the actions of others and know who the victim is. Determining whether or not the child had adequate cognitive skills to correctly evaluate the situation of others and make appropriate choices for action was an important area of this investigation. The easily aroused child can be impulsive and act before thinking carefully about consequences. The easily aroused child can also display inappropriate learned behaviors in response to distress in others. These behaviors are learned because adults or peers have reinforced them.

The third area of questioning explored what the child identified as appropriate behavior in response to the distress of others. How the child has learned a particular set of behaviors and possibly how those behaviors continue to be reinforced would be useful information in recommendations for interventions. To fully understand the children's experiences it was important to have them explain how specific responses were chosen. This question area provided insight into the complexity of their thinking.

Interview Results

Categories of responses

The interview responses were grouped into four categories; (a) causative events, (b) context, (c) strategies, and (d) consequences. Causative events are those things identified in

the conversations of the children that produced their responses. The actions of peers were described as a form of retaliation. Some children expected this would occur if they intervened.

The actions of adults described by the children were seen as directed at them. These actions included the possibility of punishment for intervention that might not be considered acceptable in some way. Some children expressed confusion or worry about their choice of action because of this concern. The children also saw adults as available to provide the intervention for them. If they wanted the victim rescued in some way that they could not accomplish, an adult could do it for them.

The context for the responses of the children included the location of the event and the people who were present. All of the children described events that occurred either on the playground or in the classroom. All the children mentioned the presence of peers. This included (a) the aggressors, (b) other participants, (c) observers, and (d) peers identified as friends by the children. Those peers labeled as friends by the children were described as possible sources of support. The children also recognized the possibility that these friends might find their action unacceptable in some way and exclude them from their group.

If adults were present in the situations described by the children, they became a consideration in decisions about their actions. Adults could provide intervention and relieve them of taking action that might prejudice them with their peers. Adults could also be the source of punishment if the action the children chose was deemed inappropriate.

The children described several strategies for intervention in the situations, which included talking to the victim, the aggressor, or both. They would tell the victim to ignore the aggressor or walk away. Half of the children said they told victims that comments made by the aggressors were not true or not fair to make them feel better. They tried to help victims recognize one or

more strong points they had to help them feel less sad. Comments to the aggressors all addressed the issue of fairness. The children attempted to explain to the aggressors that their behavior was not right because they were bigger or stronger and the victim had not done anything to them.

Asking friends for help was also discussed by some of the children. They said that it was important that all the friends agree on the course of action to be taken. Being friends and helping each other required honesty in this type of discussion. Walking away from the situation was an option for only two children. Both stated that they walk away because they did not want the same thing to happen to them.

Getting an adult to help was one of the last choices mentioned by the children. They all used other options before going to an adult. The children were concerned about repercussions and that they might get in trouble along with the aggressor if they told an adult. This was related to the expectation that the aggressor would lie about what happened.

Physical intervention such as hitting, pushing, or chasing the aggressor was mentioned. Some of the children said that they think about doing that but do not because they know they will be punished. Two said they hit or push if they are very angry with the aggressor. These two children also stated that the aggressor in their situations had caused problems for them in the past and they knew just how the current victim felt.

The consequences of intervention in the situations the children described were important to the children as they decided on a plan of action. They expressed fear of losing a friend or being isolated from others because they took action that might not be considered acceptable by peers. Several of the children were concerned that the aggressor might victimize them as retaliation for intervention.

Rescue of the victim was mentioned as a consequence. They wanted to rescue the victims

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to relieve their sadness, show friendship as support, and because they identified with how the victim felt. The feelings expressed were anger at the aggressor and sadness or loneliness for the victim.

Rectifying wrongdoing was another reason children chose to intervene. The children discussed the fairness of the actions of the aggressors. It was not fair if the aggressor was bigger, more popular, a bully, or had favor with an adult. They also commented on lack of fairness if the victim was innocent of any action that directly affected the aggressor. They seemed to recognize that the aggressor was using the victim as a scapegoat.

Themes of responses

The children clearly identified that a peer was hurting another child in some manner. They described the behavior of the aggressor in detail.

> One time there was a new kid in our class and his name was the same as another kid. We already had a kid by this name in our class and so we called them 1 and 2. Well 1 and his buddies went over to him and acted nice but then started telling him he was ruining his life because he was the only one with his name allowed in our class. That wasn't right because 2 can't help what his name is (Child 4).

> One time this kid was chasing a little kid around and then the little kid tripped. This kid and others were laughing at him. They knew he would probably trip because he can't run very well and they can scare him easy and make him run (Child 2).

> The other day this kid kept teasing another kid and telling him he was fat. This kid is so teeny how could he ever be fat. He was just wearing this puffy coat and it was sort of too big and everything, but he likes to wear it cause that just how he is. But I could tell his feelings were hurt and he was kind of mad about being called fat even if he knows he isn't. It's like the other kid was making fun of how he dressed (Child 9).

Some children included elements of their own memories of having been in the victim's situation.

> I feel lonely when I get hurt, like if someone won't play with me or makes faces at me. I can take care of myself and all that but I still feel lonely and sad. I know what it feels like to want someone to play with you or talk to you and nobody does it (Child 6).

> I sometimes do really dumb stuff like without thinking you know. And kids will tell me

how stupid I act and won't play with me or throw me the ball cause they think I'll just act goofy. I don't mean to and I feel really sad and lonely when they talk to me like that. I get mad at myself, too (Child 5).

They expressed emotional responses towards both the victim and the aggressor.

I feel real sad if I see some kid who doesn't get to play soccer with us. It's just because he can't play good or something. Then they just have to stand around and wish they could play with us, but the other kids ignore him or some even call him names (Child 1).

I'm glad if a teacher sees a kid making fun of someone because they deserve it. I don't tell on them because that would be tattling but it makes me mad to see them get away with stuff. I want to see somebody hurt them (Child 7).

I felt angry when I saw him laughing at that girl. And I also felt like he should get in big trouble for doing it. It's not fair that kids like that can get away with stuff just because other kids are afraid of them. They are just bullies (Child 5).

The violation of their sense of fairness and what was right or wrong in terms of behavior towards others was evident in their responses.

When kids tell someone they can play with them but then another friend comes over and they tell the first one they can't play anymore. It's not fair because everyone has a right to play with someone and you can't tell them to go away after you already start playing like they aren't good enough anymore (Child 10).

I always see this one kid being teased and I don't like him because he calls other kids names, even me. But it still isn't right. He gets hurt and fights back because he is mad and his feelings are hurt and he doesn't know what else to do (Child 4).

The children demonstrated an understanding of why the victims were experiencing hurtful feelings. The victim's feelings that concerned them were usually identified as sadness or fear. This understanding was part of their consideration of what action to take.

I knew my brother was really scared, like oh no he's probably going to hit me or something. The other kids were scared too because this guy is really mean and he has lots of friends that might gang up after school and hurt you if he doesn't like what you do. Everybody was scared, even the boys, and we didn't know what to do at first (Child 10).

I wonder about how that kid feels if they are all making fun of him because he can't help the way he talks and stuff like that. You can tell by their face that they want to cry because they are sad and think no one likes them, but they won't cry because then they would really get laughed at and be called baby and stuff. It would not be a good thing (Child 3).

I wanted to do something to help her but she had her friends with her. I figured they

would all get on me later. So I waited for them to leave and then I tried to cheer her up and tell him not to listen to those girls because they were just snobby. They really aren't any better just for having better stuff (Child 8).

One kid couldn't swim in the river with all the rest of us because of some medical problem and he was hassling everyone else because he was by himself. I figured he would be more mad if I just yelled at him so I went over and tried to talk to him and ask him to fish in the creek on the other side with me. He's pretty good at fishing and has a new telescoping pole. It's pretty awesome. Maybe he would stop being mad if I did that, you know, made him feel like he was more expert or something (Child 7).

They thought about the reaction of peers and what they should do within the context of their expectation of how they would behave.

The guy doing the hurting needs to be helped too but you can't just say anything to them because they will get embarrassed and be more mad. So maybe I can talk to them later or something like that. But I don't want to get them mad at me because then they'll try to hassle me too. You got to be real careful with some of these guys. They just want to look tough to the other guys (Child 5).

I talk to my friends first. If more of my friends are around we can do something because there is more of us. It's like making them think our group is better and we know more. If you can't do that you have to stay out of that and just try to be friendly to the girl they are teasing. You might want to play with them later or like get invited to their birthday next week. You got to be real careful about that (Child 10).

Adult responses were also a factor but not the major determinant of their choice of action unless they were fearful of physical harm or felt they could not stop the abuse of the victim.

I was really afraid of that kid and just figured he would punch me or something. So that's when I went to tell the aide what was going on. He was really out of control and somebody could have gotten hurt bad if no one stopped him (Child 3).

Telling a teacher is like tattling and we have a rule in our class about that. And you have to have witnesses and everything. It's easier to just settle it yourself. I'm pretty good at talking to kids and I just tell the little kids to go away and play somewhere else. Teachers would just do that. They won't do anything except maybe make then stand against the wall for the rest of recess (Child 2).

Empathetic Response

The empathetic experience for the children in this study began with their recognition of the pain and emotional state of the victims. They reflected on their own prior experience and used

this to identify and describe the feelings of the victim. The children experienced an emotional response related to their own history of being hurt by someone else.

Seeing another child being hurt in some way caused distress for the children in this study. The actions of peers that caused the victim's distress were familiar to these children. They had all been in the victim's position. They attributed negative intent to the actions of the aggressors based on their previous experience. This was a learned social response that occurs when children experience aggression and rejection from peers. Their sense of fairness was violated as they experienced a connection to the victim. They knew what it felt like and what they wanted to see done about it.

These children were able to reflect on their own experience to take the perspective of the victim. The victims were seen as separate and distinct from themselves. Taking the perspective of another person allowed the children to respond in a manner that addressed the needs of the victim and not just their own needs.

Although it has been proposed that easily aroused children lack the ability to regulate emotional responses, these children showed they had the ability to self-regulate in a thoughtful manner. The level of arousal of affect in the children was intense. The ability of the children to experience the emotions of the victim helped motivate them to take an action that would relieve the discomfort of the other child.

The children were able to keep their emotional responses under control and responded with behaviors that show empathy and are prosocial. Their feelings were intense, but they were not so aroused that they felt they could not control the feelings. The children felt competent to make a decision regarding their behavior and act on it because they perceived themselves to be in control of their own emotions.

Expressing their feelings to the victim as a choice of behavioral response was seen as an appropriate way to bring comfort to the victim and to themselves. Perhaps the children saw the potential for developing new relationships as they intervened on behalf of the victims. The expression of affect was not seen as a detriment to their interpersonal relationships with their peers when it was expressed to the victim. Some of the children in this study chose to express feelings to the aggressor. Perhaps they saw that as the only alternative available to stop the aggressor from continuing to harass the victim. It may also reflect a sense of confidence on the part of these children in their ability to keep their emotional reactions under control.

The cognitive skills the children used to respond were developed as part of their experiential process. This experience allowed the children to evaluate and modify the intensity of their emotional responses. The children were familiar with the feelings of anger, fear, and sadness that they vicariously experienced watching the aggressors and victims. They were able to maintain their arousal level low enough to give them a sense of being in control of the feeling. These children had made an adaptation to the affect associated with the negative events they described. The events were very familiar to them.

Impulsivity and inability to inhibit responses is also a trait of the easily aroused child with externalizing behaviors. The children in this study showed they had the ability to inhibit portions of their emotional responses. A lack of emotional regulation would be seen in responses that were hostile and possibly directed towards the aggressors.

The children addressed the rightness or wrongness of the actions of the aggressors. They expressed this to themselves, the victims and aggressors, and as an important component of their responses. They looked at the context of each event. They were particularly conscious of the presence of peers and possible ramifications of their choice of actions with peers. They wanted to

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take action to rectify the wrong they saw done but did not want to place themselves in the position of victim. Prior experiences of these children as victims of aggressors led them to recognize hostile intent. They considered the effect their actions would have on the situation. They chose not to respond with aggression that would not have been a productive solution.

The children thought through their actions. If they felt too threatened by peer presence, their intervention was with the victim to comfort and encourage them. If they felt more confident with their peers and their ability to regulate their emotional response they directed their intervention to the aggressor. Approaching the aggressor could cause an argument escalating to physical aggression. Choosing this action shows greater ability to monitor and control an emotional response. These children knew the aggressors and had experience with the behaviors they observed. The children had an expectation of certain emotional and behavioral responses from their peers based on their own choice of behaviors.

Watching another child being hurt by a peer caused strong emotional responses in these children. Their actions however, were not intended just as a relief of their own distress. They also wanted to seek justice in some manner and to convey to others the right way they should behave toward each other. Instead of engaging in antisocial behavior when experiencing strong emotional arousal, these children showed constraint and thoughtfulness in their actions.

Some of the children expressed concern about being punished for their actions. Some indicated they would only seek adult attention as a last resort because of this. Past experience of punishment for antisocial behaviors was a factor. Adults would expect anger, aggression, and other inappropriate expressions of emotion. The children in this study did not see adults as fair and unbiased in their interventions.

Implications

The easily aroused child has been viewed as possibly lacking in the ability to experience empathy for others, and engage in prosocial behaviors. The responses of the children interviewed suggest that in fact this type of child may be able to (a) recognize the feelings of others, (b) relate them to their personal experiences yet keep them separate, and (c) make reasoned decisions about their actions.

What may be lacking for the easily aroused type of child is knowledge of specific intervention strategies. These children are expressing a violation of their sense of fairness with associated anger. If they do not have specific strategies available to use, then they may engage in what adults consider being antisocial behaviors. This would include physical or verbal aggression. Providing skills training for the easily aroused child could eliminate undesirable behaviors for some children.

An important implication of the interview results is the need for adults to become more sensitive to the keen sense of fairness that easily aroused children have. Disciplinary interventions should consider this aspect of their behavioral choices. What has been perceived as strictly antisocial behavior may be merely a distortion of prosocial behavior to aide victims. A child may simply have a lack of skills to choose alternative behaviors and so engages in behavior that actually escalates the situation at times rather than correcting it.

Counseling programs should also consider this sense of fairness these children have and address it as a critical component of problem solving and other cognitive skills training. It would be appropriate to help them learn to take the perspective of the aggressor and not just the victim. The children in this study have not only been victims but have also been in the role of aggressor. These children recognize the problem. They know what they want for a solution. What they need

is assistance with learning to recognize resources and practicing more alternatives for their behavior depending on specific situations they find themselves in. The school where this study was done recognized this need and began a classroom instructional program to prevent bullying.

The Bully Prevention Project

The school site where this interview study was conducted began to identify a need to make adjustments in the school discipline program to address the issue of bullying. A new classroom instruction program has been started. This program incorporates the elements of the experience of empathy identified by the children: actions, context, strategies, consequences, and intervention with both the aggressor and the victim. It is a program that can be used at grades 3-5. Classroom teacher participation in the instruction and follow-up actions as well as support from the school site administrator is critical.

Program Goals

The goals for this program addressed students, staff, and parents. Development of goals in this manner fit with the already existing school philosophy of working as a team to meet the needs of all those involved.

Goals for students.

1. Students will learn that bullying includes all behaviors that are hurtful to others such as teasing, name-calling, interfering with work, and exclusion from games.

2. Students will learn what to do when confronted by a bully.

3. Students will learn what they can to when they see someone else being bullied.

4. Students will develop a sense of the class and school as a community that respects the rights, feelings, and uniqueness of each person.

Goals for staff.

1. Staff will learn what bullying is and to recognize when it is happening at school both in the classroom as well as other areas.

2. Staff will learn to support students in their efforts to stop bullying through coaching,

supervision, and discussion with them about how to apply the skills learned.

3. Staff will learn to respond and intervenes appropriately to student complaints about bully behaviors.

Goals for parents.

1. Parents will learn the techniques that are being taught to their children at school for responding to bully behavior towards themselves and others.

2. Parents will learn how to help their child apply the skills being learned.

Program Content

This program is designed for use in grades 3 through 5. The lessons present the basic concepts of bullying and strategies to use to respond to it through the use of lecture, demonstration, role-playing, cooperative groups, and discussion. A critical aspect of this program is helping students learn to speak and listen to each other. Through this experience the students begin to develop empathy for their peers and recognize their responsibility as a member of the school community to assist and support classmates in dealing with bully behavior.

The instructional component for students includes (a) perspective taking, (b) communication skills to assist in better expressing their feelings, (c) problem solving, and (d) conflict resolution. These skills are taught through a variety of activities that vary with the grade level. Older students participate in role-playing, cooperative learning groups, and group discussions addressing actual events from their school day experience. Other activities include making posters to "advertise" the no bullying ideas, group games using problem solving skills, and discussion groups. All students work together to develop class rules regarding bullying. These rules help the students identify the need to include everyone in their activit9e as a major tool to preventing bullying, as well as general statements that bullying will not be tolerated.

Also included in this program is an emphasis on working together as a community to help

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each other. Students are encouraged to listen to their peers and aide those they see being victimized. Teachers will be encouraged to listen to students with a new perspective that recognizes that apparent antisocial behavior may be learned responses on the part of a child with good intentions. They may also consider that some children need changes in the environment and expectations for their behavior in order function at their best and learn new patterns of behavior.

Parents are provided with support materials for use at home as needed. They are kept informed of the progress of the program through the school newsletter. Parents are encouraged to talk with their children about bullying issues and to report incidents to the school administration. They can also ask for assistance for themselves or their child in dealing with specific issues that arise.

The lesson plans are presented with a statement of objectives, a sequence of activities for each lesson, and the basic materials needed in the form of student handouts. These are not scripted lessons. They are designed to allow flexibility in the actual discussions of the students to foster greater growth in their communication and interaction with each other. The sequence in which the skills are taught can be altered if needed. Extra lessons may also be included to address areas of need identified as the program progresses. There are no written tests to assess student progress. Rather assessment is accomplished through looking at the daily behavior of students, monitoring discipline referrals, and by listening to the students themselves.

There are two series of lessons. The first is a minimum of eight weeks of lessons, which are 40-45 minutes in duration. Shorter lesson times do not allow for adequate discussion by students. However it is not inappropriate to lengthen the discussion period if time permits. This series can be used when the program is first being introduced to a school. The second series of lessons is designed for use as a review either later in the school year or the following year for

those classes that have already covered the first series. Lessons are presented weekly on a set schedule so that students can look forward to the time for discussing their concerns and asking questions. While these lessons are not intended to be a counseling group, they do have the quality of a support group for many students. As the lessons progress you may want to offer actual small group or individual counseling sessions to some of the students. Some students in fact may ask for this and every effort should be made to respond to that need.

A critical component of this program is the time spent with staff. Unless all the staff are familiar with what is being taught and have the knowledge to respond in a supportive manner, this program will not work for your school. Typically schools respond to aggressive behavior of students by calling forth other students as witnesses to the behavior. At this school, one of the main concerns expressed by everyone was that students who witnessed some behaviors were reluctant to come forth because of fear of reprisals by the bully. To address that, the school took that position that all reports of bully behavior from students would get a response. That response would be to help the victim utilize skills taught. It would also include intervention with the bully, which could be punishment, parent conferencing, and possibly counseling for that child. What this teaches the children is that what they have to say is important. They also learn that reporting behavior just to get someone in trouble was not appropriate and in fact was not going to happen.

Program Outcomes

The lessons for bully prevention were begun with the 3rd and 4th grade students. At the beginning of instruction at each class level the students were asked to complete a survey. The same survey was administered one year later. Questions were asked regarding the frequency and type of bully behavior they experienced or engaged in with peers. Before the bully prevention program began verbal aggression was reported occurring at least twice each week by 41% of

both boys and girls in the 3rd grade and by 38% of those in the 4th grade. Physical aggression was reported occurring at least twice a week by 29% of the boys and 24% of the girls in the 3rd grade. Physical aggression was reported by 44% of 4th grade students.

Specific questions on the survey revealed decrease in all bully behaviors over the course of a year. Prior to the program 33% of students reported feeling scared or nervous about going to school. After the program the number was reduced to 27%. The number worried about bullying in class dropped from 23% to 5%; bullying in the cafeteria dropped from 31% to 16%; and bullying on the bus dropped from 61% to 22%. Physical aggression overall dropped to 19%. Verbal aggression showed decline to 32% from 38% but continues to be an area of concern for students and staff.

The students were also asked whom at school they turned to for help in dealing with bullying. The majority who had indicated they were bullied stated they told no one and received help from no one. Those who sought help did so from parents or siblings. At the end of the year those reporting bullying increased from 22% to 41%. Most of these stated they would share the concern with a family adult. It should be noted that as part of the program students are encouraged to share with an adult either at home or at school, their problems with bullies so that they can receive assistance in using the techniques they are taught in the program.

After completion of the initial series of lessons six students in grades 3 and 4 were informally interviewed to elicit their view of the impact of the bully prevention lessons. Although these students were not included in the original study of empathy, they did fit the profile of the easily aroused child. They were also students who had been identified as engaging in some bully behavior with other students.

All of the students stated that bullying had decreased in their classes. They related the

decrease to two main factors. They said that teachers were now watching the bullies more carefully so they didn't get away with the behavior as often. They also said that other kids were inviting them to play more often or letting them play if they asked to be included in a game. These are both specific skills taught as part of the bully prevention classes.

Two of the students who had previously been involved in bully behaviors with peers have not been referred for aggressive behaviors since the lessons started. They both talked about playing with other peers. One of them stated that he had "found some other guys to play with who liked me because I don't get into so much trouble any more".

The bully prevention program was in the early stage of implementation when the students were interviewed. Those lessons now are moving into the second phase. As the program progresses further information will be gathered from the students about their experiences with peers as it related to bullying and their emotional reactions to it. This preliminary feedback from the children involved as victims and aggressors provides an echo of the comments made by the easily aroused children in the original study. They kids are sensitive to the reactions or adults, re relieved to see them becoming more alert to the problem, and also seem to be learning how to related in a different manner to some of their peers.

It is important to recognize that easily aroused children are capable of great empathy. They are also capable of engaging in appropriate behaviors in response. These abilities need to be expanded and reinforced so that these children will be better able to develop their interpersonal skills. A bully prevention program is one example of a potentially powerful tool to use with these children.

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